

Repositioning Mission in Postmodern Culture

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Abstract

Postmodernism is a worldview culture entering Asian society lately. It provides the impression of values such as spirituality, pluralism, relativism, altruism, which causes significant shifts. It consists of the decline in religious spirituality, disorientation from pluralism, the power to provide information through visuals due to blurred reality and imagination, the emptiness at the core of culture, and a shift in power to a newer state. The Church needs to capture and understand how Culture works. It required to reach a cultural paradigm with the gospel message as well as challenges presently faced by the Church.

Keywords: *repositioning, Church missions, postmodern*

Introduction

The world has continuously experienced the ongoing process of change, which is always preceded and guided by science, also known as the human cognitive domain. It is sourced in the realm of cognitive change, which is preceded by affection to form skills in the form of social attitudes in human culture. Therefore, the cognitive paradigm shift simultaneously gives birth to a significant change in other domains, which forms a new culture called the postmodern era.

The main ideas of postmodernism are clashes, with the rare acceptance and rejection of modifications. Therefore, the church as a community needs to possess sufficient theological and intellectual enlightenment to reposition its mission tailored to meet the current century. There are various positive attributes in the concept of postmodernism, which is closely related to productive, creative, and Christian Culture on fundamental issues.

The postmodernism thought consists of six aspects. The first is the destruction of a single truth (decentralization), which is replaced by particularism (paralogy). It followed by a turn toward semiotics, a difference over identity (pluralism), science laden with values, the attachment to time, and the democratization of meaning.

Halim Wiryadinata (2015:1)(Wiryadinata, 2015) stated that theologians have debated for years on the top priority of postmodernism. Some theologians stated that the primary purpose of this mission is to evangelize, show love, and to carry out social actions.

Postmodernism thought emerged as a correction of modernism based on individual subjectivity, rationalism, and empiricism. Grenz (2001:9)(Grenz, 2001) defined it as a rejection of the modern way people think.

Challenge and Motivation

In reality, the Church has rapidly developed with numerous experiences and mission activities. However, it has only produced a few models and systems of thought comprehensible with the mysterious relationship

between the Christian Faith and other religions. It shows that the church is entirely insensitive to more profound mission questions, in meeting knowing the differences/similarities between religions.

Griffioen reported that the issue of comparison and reciprocal relationship between Christianity and other religions also needs to be considered (Griffioen, 2018). In the world of reformation, missiologist Johan Herman Bavinck (1889-1964) revealed the secrets of religious diversity and showed its importance. Missiologists Johannes Verkuyl (1908-2001) and Hendrik Echo (1902-2007) made their contributions to the development of good spiritual theology and reflections. Douwe Klaas Wielenga JDzn (1905-1981) and Johannes Blauw (1912-2007) contribution to the development of religious theology, is enormous and should not be underestimated due to its essence to the Christian faith concerning other religions.

However, the church needs to carefully analyze its paradigm shift of thought, mission, challenges, other religions, and anticipates the world's population, following countries with the most significant number of non-Christians.

Method

It is a descriptive-analytical study, which etymologically describes and analyzes the church's efforts in achieving its mission. Furthermore, interpretive analysis is used for adequate understanding and explanation of mission repositioning in the culture of postmodernism. Deductive-inductive is used to formulate the idea of mission and postmodern principles with a conceptual framework used as a repositioning reference.

Discussion

The phenomenon of postmodern

Postmodernism is a movement of ideas that replaces modern beliefs. However, sociologists disagree on the world's current period of post-modernity, which is often characterized by prioritizing ratios, objectivity, totality, and systematization (Louis Leahy, 1985). According to Sugiharto (2000), the principle of postmodernism is the fusion of boundaries and the distinction between high and low cultures, appearance and truth, symbols, and authenticity, as well as universals and peripherals. Therefore, it is an intellectual atmosphere.

Experts carried out debates amongst themselves to determine the aspects included in postmodernism with the conclusion that it marks the end of a universal perspective. Furthermore, the previous definition of a postmodern ethos that rejects harmonious was discarded following the differences and respects for people. Postmodernism rejects the emphasis on scientific discovery, which is the intellectual foundation of modernism to create a better world. It is also defined as anti-modern.

However, the word postmodern includes more than an intellectual atmosphere with rejections of rationality manifested in many dimensions of present-day society. In recent years, its mindsets manifest in many aspects of culture, including architecture, art, and drama. It has penetrated in all communities with a shift from modern to postmodern in pop culture, and from music videos to the Star Trek series. Furthermore, the spiritual attributes and how to dress are also affected.

Modern understanding connects truth with a ratio for it to become the benchmark of honesty with logic. Postmoderns also doubt the concept of universal truth, as evidenced by the efforts of reason, while analyzing attributes with higher truth rate. They determine non-racial ways to seek knowledge, such as through emotion and intuition.

Conversely, modernity has divided traditional groups, including families, and promoted individualism, mobility, and competition. It is also faced with a cruel world, where people seek for new identities of support

and solidarity to determine ethnicity/religion. Furthermore, in the field of religion, people move from institutional control and dogmatic certainty to associative communities to experience the freedom of selection. Those that postulate postmodernism are more focused on the deconstruction of modern society without emerging with an alternative vision. Unfortunately, this also applies to the Church with a convincing new vision relevant to the post-modern world.

Besides entering almost all fields in the secular world, postmodern culture also describes the Christian life. When Protestantism produces enlightenment, evangelicalism produces modernism, and Pentecostalism provides a tremendous impetus for postmodernism.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the belief in the ability of human thought turned out to be frustrating, because the cultivation results produced the existence of world war, natural disasters, and suffering. Modernism is considered the inability to bring good to humans. It also accompanies individualism due to the change from an agrarian to an industrial society. This accelerates the disappointments that undermine the great belief in mind, which adhered to Individualism and produced soul emptiness relationships between people.

Furthermore, the encounters with non-Christian cultures due to globalization, which were triggered due to the advancement of transportation and communication facilities, led to the questioning of philosophical and religious beliefs. Each group claims that it produces the most objective and absolute truth. These intercultural encounters led to the emergence of a new socio-cultural and philosophical postmodern chapter.

Therefore, it is concluded that postmodern rejects all objective and absolute truths. The only fact that is worthy of trust is "truth is relative" to the feelings of each individual based on experience.

Opportunities Beyond the Barrier

Postmodernism culture needs to be responded to neutrally with positive or negative potential. However the Church needs to also see this as an opportunity rather than an obstacle for the Mission to be carried out. In this section, the effects produced by postmodernism on the mission are as follows:

1. Postmodern challenges can stimulate maturity in terms of thinking, for those that have embraced fundamentalist conservatism.
2. Postmodernism describes arrogant as pure science and logic, which creates room for the possibility of faith and the supernatural. It also stated that science and religion could coexist.
3. Postmodernism tends to provide space for empathy for the marginalized and the oppressed. It creates an opportunity for the church to deliver missionary news of Jesus.
4. It allows higher tolerance between beliefs and creates a possible way to the Great Commission through greater love and acceptance for non-Christians.
5. Postmodernism allows freedom of opinion in one's perspective of relative or non-absolute "truth." It makes one less judgmental and condemning towards behavior, style, and personal preferences that may be less conventional. Furthermore, it is an antidote to the true hypocritical nature.
6. Postmodernism allows for greater empathy towards an increasingly pluralistic society, challenges humans not to get out of touch with how people think and function.
7. The concepts of control, power, and certainty are replaced by love, service, and faith.
8. Postmodernism allows spiritual, emotional truth, and epistemology (knowledge theory), which transcends the boundaries of science, logic, and reason.

With the change in the pattern of life, the church needs to re-reflect on the models of ecclesiastical mission that has been adhered to consistently. Old habits that have been successful in the past are not

necessarily relevant today. The church needs to reorganize its mission to answer the needs of this generation, following the challenges of the contemporary era. This article provides practical suggestions for the church in repositioning its mission in postmodern culture.

The Mission of Historical Relations

The mission presented in the 21st century relates to life processes which holistically based on ratios, and individuals as well as groups. The historical aspects of the present become inseparable because its history is inseparable from the past. According to Drewes and Mojau (2003), "Carrying out a mission without knowing its history is the same as missioning without experience." It means history provides a reason for future activities, with inseparable missions.

The bible is the past and present source of the mission without eliminating or rejecting God's truths. Furthermore, past missions are constructed based on valid council values, with current tasks built based on the correction. Therefore, history is not only studied given the dominant parties, as reflected in the decisions of the councils and committees but also under those marginalized in the society such as women and the poor."(Drewes & Mojau, 2003)

Therefore, history influences mission construction from the dominants and subordinates. It also has a historical relationship that cannot be eliminated. Thus, the values of the past remain part of the present and future missions. Avis (2001) stated that the current truth described as an interpretation of what was said or written in the past. It means that the existence of a theological correction of the mission confirms that truth is not absolute.

The Mission of Dialogical Relations

Today's mission confronted with a dialogical context that emphasizes the fulfilling needs of the church or local people. The existence of a pluralistic order of life is expected to produce mutual respect for missiological understanding.

The dialogic relation aims to place the mission in an open position to other truths without being trapped in syncretism or theological synthesis, thereby leading to obscurity and unhealthiness. Furthermore, dialogical attitudes emphasize that no form of theology dominates others. On the contrary, the missions of the dialogical relation put all types of theology in an open position to correct and avoid the attitude of theological absolutism. Singgih (2009) stated that religions tend to criticize themselves for determining the truth, which frees both parties.

Dialogue puts the opponent in the same position towards the search for theological truth, and not as a dominating position. "Therefore, it is clear that every true Christian interpretation needs to be valid and correct and accepted by the interpreted party." (Panikkar, 1999)

The Mission of Contextual Relations

Widjaja (2018) stated that missiology is the study of God (Theology), experience, and walking with God's truth (John 3:16), while anthropology is the study of humans and Culture, is involved in its history. Missiology is a critical human effort to understand God in its existence. Human effort related to the context of the church's mission includes background, goals, and purpose.

Mission contextualization places a position on contemporary thinking which is accepted and applied by the church. According to Hesselgrave & Romen (2004), "Missiology needs to be relevant in certain cultures ..." It means missions are carried out in a harmonious context without being trapped in negative tolerance and

capable of eliminating theological meaning to reinforce cultural or traditional sense. The mission is not free or dominant from tradition. Widjaja and Boiliu (2019), stated that contextualization needs to avoid the force of justification. It means that the missions of Christ need to remain consistent with the great commission. Indeed dialogue or partnering with tradition does not reduce interpretation.; As a result, the mission is not different from the tradition while theology confirms the truths. God is glorified in the theology and tradition of church members.

The mission of contextual relationships seeks to understand its text/context and truth through dialectical methods without theology, which is irrelevant or trapped. The contextualization of theology by church members places the Bible as an invaluable source of God's truth.

Mission contextualization does not involve God in the shackles of Culture or tradition. Instead, it is used by God to be glorified. "God is not bound by human culture; rather, He controls its use for His holy revelation."(Hesselgrave & Romen, 2004) It means that God is sovereign of the tradition and contextualization of the mission built by human ideas.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The author needs to emphasize the difference between compromise and tolerance. The inclusion of postmodern views in Churches does not mean its mission needs to survive in meaningless mandates. The fact that Christ came to the world to show tolerance towards sinners, both Jews, and foreigners, do not automatically show that He was compromising on sin. However, it was a divine tolerance that Jesus showed as a manifestation of the great grace of God to humans.

The mission presented is a solid form and is expected to be able to fill the needs of today's mission tentatively. It is following the requirements of the religious sensationalism or indoctrinations of thoughts, which emphasizes dogma.

The mission of the previous church is unclear and inconsistent because of various limitations resulting in a negative perspective on theology and tradition. After understanding this description, it is hoped that the church can provide a healthy missiological perspective on postmodern traditions or Culture and contextual mission concepts. God needs to be glorified in the world through the church.

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